

AETC News Clips

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2 Oct 01



LM OTERO/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Firefighters and recovery workers pay their respects Monday as the flag-draped remains of two victims recovered from the World Trade Center's ruins are carried away.

Pentagon focuses on home defense

Overseas readiness is no longer alone as the military's top priority.

BY ESTHER SCHRADER
LOS ANGELES TIMES

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon called Monday for making homeland defense as high a priority as girding for conflicts abroad, reflecting a shift in attitude toward its mission after the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States.

But in a top-to-bottom review of the military,

largely completed before the attacks but altered since then, the agency fails to address specifically how to accomplish that aim.

Over the summer, Pentagon strategists preparing the document had proposed cutting the size of the military's active-duty force of 1.4 million people and moving resources away from ground forces and into air power.

But in its final form, the review largely avoids calling for specific cuts, shifts in force structure or purchases of weapons systems.

It now calls for a greater role for the National Guard and Reserves in protecting U.S. interests at home, beefing up intelligence and surveil-

lance efforts to fight terrorism, and for moving carrier battle groups, ground forces, battleships and airplanes out of Europe and into the Persian Gulf and Asia to protect evolving U.S. interests abroad.

But the "Quadrennial Defense Review," mandated by Congress, is resoundingly not what Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had promised when he came into office: a fundamental reassessment of the use of U.S. military might.

The Pentagon says with its focus now shifted

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Homeland defense high priority for Pentagon

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to a palpable threat, such an assessment — and the hard decisions it would involve — must wait.

Critics charge that even as it mobilizes its largest force since the Persian Gulf War, the Pentagon is doing little to address the fundamental challenge of shifting its long-term response to a radically altered strategic world.

"The key issue is whether the (terrorist) attacks are going to lead to a fundamental reassessment by the United States of its defense structure," said Mike Brown, director of the National Security Studies Program at Georgetown University. "That sort of reassessment has been needed for 10 years, and it is needed even more now. It still hasn't taken place, and it doesn't look like we are going to find it in this review."

Earlier this summer, Rumsfeld was said to be looking at eliminating two of the Army's 10 active-duty divisions, one of the Navy's 12 carrier battle groups and one of the Air Force's 12 active fighter wings.

But now, the terrorist attacks preclude any "substantial reductions in forces," the document says.

The review does propose certain changes in the way the military deploys its forces and in the equipment it uses. Included in the recommendations are more money for intelligence satellites, unmanned reconnaissance aircraft, and spies and special-forces troops to seek out terrorists in their sanctuaries.

It calls for putting more aircraft carriers, guided cruise missile submarines and battle-

ships in the Pacific and shifting Marine Corps warships from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf.

It recommends augmenting both ground forces in the Persian Gulf and the Air Force's ability to refuel and maintain aircraft operating in the Mideast.

It does not confront the potential political problems of increasing the U.S. military presence in regions where it might not be welcomed.

On the issue of homeland security, the report says the Pentagon must place "new emphasis on the unique operational demands associated with the defense of the United States" and that such efforts should be restored as the Defense Department's "primary mission."

The report defers most specifics on accomplishing this to the newly created Office of Homeland Security, the Cabinet-level agency recently created by President Bush that will be headed by Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge. The report does call for better ways to protect the nation's oil and gas supply and its communications system.

It also says the Pentagon's most useful role in protecting the homeland will be to combat threats before they reach American shores. To that end, it proposes a heightened role for special operations units and for increased intelligence to ferret out foes who try to offset America's advantages in high-technology weaponry with low-tech improvisations, such as the use of box cutters to hijack the airplanes used in the Sept. 11 attacks.

Overall, the report echoes Rumsfeld's concept



GREG LOVETT/ASSOCIATED PRESS

U.S. Army Reserve Staff Sgt. William Meloy says goodbye to his wife, Shannon; son, Taylor; and daughter, Courtney, in Lake Worth, Fla., before reporting for active duty at Fort Stewart, Ga.

of a more nimble, agile military. It says the United States is a global power with "important geopolitical interests" everywhere.

As expected, the report drops the requirement adopted in the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, that the military be able to conduct two major wars at the same time, such as in the Persian Gulf and on the Korean Peninsula.

Instead, it aims for a military able to fight both two "overlapping wars" and a multitude of smaller conflicts.

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Doctor calls FBI 'friends'

But Al-Hazmi said he feared for his life

By SCOTT HUDDLESTON
EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER

The San Antonio radiologist who was held almost two weeks before being cleared as a material witness in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks said in a televised interview Monday night that he viewed the FBI agents who arrested him as friends.

"They were so professional. They conducted themselves to the best," Dr. Al-Badr M.H. Al-Hazmi said on "Dateline NBC."

Al-Hazmi, who was arrested the morning after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, said one of his most fearful moments came about a week later as he was being transferred from the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Manhattan to a jail in Brooklyn.

"What I could say is that night I was scared for my life.

"The emotions were too high, and I could feel it. And I could see it in their eyes," he said of his jailers.

"You have to understand that some of those guys who are working 24 hours, maybe some of their loved ones (got) killed in those towers."

But he had nothing but good things to say about the FBI agents who held him.

"No, I'm not angry, because I believe everything happens for a reason."

"No, I'm not angry, because I believe everything happens for a reason."

Al-Hazmi also told how a fellow detainee jumped up to get a view of the smoldering wreckage of the twin towers as they flew into New York.

The doctor was being detained with two suspects, Ayub Ali Khan and Mohammed Jaweed Azmath, who were reportedly found carrying box cutters aboard a San Antonio-bound Amtrak train in Fort Worth.

All three were flown to Minneapolis, where they picked up Zacarias Moussaoui, a French-Moroccan who allegedly had offered to pay cash to learn to fly a Boeing 747.

During the flight out of Minneapolis, Al-Hazmi said he was about to cry when Moussaoui, whom French authorities have linked to Osama bin Laden, tried to comfort him.

"He said, 'Just be patient. Things will go smooth.' And he

was talking about himself. ... 'We are innocent — all of us here are innocent,' " Al-Hazmi recalled Moussaoui saying.

The four men realized they were flying into New York after a U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service official remarked he could still see fire coming from the trade center three days after the attacks.

"I said, 'Oh my God, this is the last place I want to be, because the emotions will be high there,'" he recalled.

Al-Hazmi said Moussaoui jumped up to view the ruins.

"Did he seem upset or bothered by it? Or just curious and interested?" NBC correspondent John Larson asked.

"Shocked," Al-Hazmi replied. "He was — he was — to me he was in shock, yeah."

He told Larson he would be surprised if Moussaoui were ever found guilty of participating in the Sept. 11 attacks.

"I'll be surprised, yes," he said. "I'll not be shocked because people can do anything nowadays."

Looking back at his ordeal, Al-Hazmi said: "I was angry inside my heart, but I kept reminding myself there are people hurt. They lost their lives, and whatever I'm suffering now is nothing compared to what they are going through."

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Governor selects task force to examine state's security

Dewhurst tapped as chairman

By PEGGY FIKAC

CHIEF, EXPRESS-NEWS AUSTIN BUREAU

AUSTIN — Declaring that Texans can't be complacent, Gov. Rick Perry named a task force Monday to assess and recommend ways to improve Texas' security.

Task force members — whose job includes examining coastline security and communicating with officials from other states and Mexico — will work in coordination with the new federal Office of Homeland Security created by President Bush after the Sept. 11 attacks in New York and Washington.

National security experts see an important role for the Governor's Task Force on Homeland Security, citing the potential to more rapidly react to threats.

Political experts don't take issue with the task force's value but see political implications in Perry's choice of chairman.

The GOP governor picked Land Commissioner David Dewhurst, calling him highly qualified and noting his background, which includes service as a CIA case officer.

Dewhurst also is a fellow Republican who has announced for lieutenant governor. He hasn't said publicly if he'll stick with that race now that a U.S. Senate seat will be open.

"None," Perry said of the political considerations of assigning a high-profile role to a GOP candidate. "I know of no one in state government who has his broad background relative to this specific issue."

Perry named William Sessions of San Antonio, former FBI director and former federal district judge, as vice chairman.

Members include lawmakers from both parties and people such as Dr. Amanullah Khan of Dallas, past president of the Association of Pakistani Physicians of North America.

Rep. Kino Flores, D-Mission, said his focus will include border security and its effect on the economy.

"Not everybody agrees with having the military along the border. I'm of the opinion that during this type of crisis, we're going to go through some inconveniences," said Flores, a retired Army sergeant. But while ensuring security, he said, "we have to worry about the commerce."

The task force fills an important role, said two security experts who don't serve on it.

Sessions "brings a lot of competence to this challenge" of ensuring state readiness, said retired Adm. Bobby Inman, past National Security Agency director.

"Warning time becomes the most critical ingredient. How quickly do you recognize the indicators that something may be about to happen and provide warning to people?" Inman said. "The focus here needs to be on time."

Edwin Dorn, dean of the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas, said the group is "an important complement to the federal effort."

Still, Dorn voiced concern about the state and federal entities carrying the "homeland" label. He'd prefer "civil defense."

"The word homeland reminds many Americans of the old German word *vaterland* and thus causes a lot of discomfort," said Dorn, an undersecretary of defense in 1993-97.

By any name, political observers said, the task force carries a touch of politics since the chairman, Dewhurst, is a candidate.

"It very definitely raises his profile," said UT political scientist Bruce Buchanan.

Buchanan said any politician would take into account the polit-

ical ramifications of such an appointment along with its merits.

Dewhurst's background "makes him a credible appointment to such a position, even though it does have the collateral effect of help-

ing him politically," he said.

Consultant Bill Miller said, "I guess that means Dewhurst is running for lieutenant governor; wouldn't you say? He is a good pick, but in this day and time, it's hard to separate the politics from it."

Dewhurst wouldn't talk politics Monday, saying, "Today is a day that we're talking about homeland security, and if you want to talk about politics, I'd be delighted to talk politics with you tomorrow."

Greg Hartman, a spokesman for Democratic lieutenant governor candidate John Sharp, said, "We'll give the benefit of the doubt to the governor. It's hard to imagine anybody would try to be partisan at a time like this."

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NEWS BRIEFS

Bush-King Abdullah message in dispute

AMMAN, Jordan — The official Jordanian news agency reported Monday that King Abdullah II won a promise from President Bush not to strike any Arab country during retaliation for the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

The White House immediately challenged the report.

"It is wrong. What the president told the king is those who harbor terrorists will meet the same fate as the terrorists," said White House spokesman Ari Fleischer.

Navy dispatching 4th aircraft carrier

WASHINGTON — President Bush's war on terrorism gained a fourth aircraft carrier Monday but the USS Kitty Hawk isn't bringing along its full fleet of planes. The Kitty Hawk will serve as a floating base for other forces, defense officials said.

Iran warns U.S. not to use its airspace

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran warned the United States not to use Iranian airspace for an attack on neighboring Afghanistan, saying Monday that Tehran will react "strongly" if its sky is violated.

— Compiled from wire reports



DEWHURST

DEWHURST



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Shelton gives up Joint Chiefs reins

Air Force general takes top job

By SUSANNE M. SCHAFER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

FORT MYER, Va. — The nation's top military commander bid adieu to his troops Monday, saying the armed forces are ready to take on the "evil and barbaric" foes who recently attacked America.

Army Gen. Henry Shelton marked the end of his 38 years of military service and tenure as President Bush's senior military adviser



MYERS

by touching again and again on the new mission handed the military in its war against terrorism. "I have no doubt that you will stand tall and vigilant against those who seek to destroy the enduring freedoms that we enjoy as Americans," said Shelton.

The retiring chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was joined by his wife, Carolyn, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and the new Joint Chiefs chairman, Air Force Gen. Richard Myers, at the ceremony.

The event was also attended by many of the nation's top military commanders and an

other former chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Secretary of State Colin Powell.

The end of Shelton's second two-year term came as tens of thousands of military men and women have begun to mobilize in response to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks against New York and the Pentagon.

Shelton, wearing his black Army beret, joined Rumsfeld as they strode across the parade field under a cloudy sky at Fort Myer, near the Pentagon. The four-star Army general was honored with a cannon salute as wind whipped the flags from honor guards of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.

"I wish you and the president all the best as you set the course for our country in the difficult and uncertain months ahead," Shelton said.

"Recent evil and barbaric attacks have been made against the United States and the people of the world," the general said, adding that the United States has responded by calling on other nations to join in.



OUR TURN

U.S. must be ready to fight bioterrorism

U.S. officials suspect that a dozen nations, including Iraq, have biological weapons.

The intelligence community also believes that terrorist Osama bin Laden has made efforts to get his hands on deadly germs.

The ongoing terrorism probe spawned by the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon led federal officials to halt the use of crop dusters for two days last week. At least one terrorist involved in the Sept. 11 attacks had made inquiries about the operation of planes used to spray pesticides on crops.

A successful biological attack could kill millions of people, who would suffer horrifying, painful deaths.

The United States must accelerate and expand its effort to prepare for such an event.

Sens. Ted Kennedy, D-Mass, and Bill Frist, R-Tenn., want to spend \$1 billion of the recently approved \$40 billion emergency package to beef up public health programs that will help defend and respond to biological attacks.

Their congressional colleagues should support their efforts.

Officials have been stockpiling antibiotics and vaccines, but the New York Times has reported that few health experts believe the United States is adequately pre-

Public health officials will play an important role in the nation's ongoing war on terrorism.

pared.

For example, fewer than 15 million doses of smallpox vaccine are in stock, but officials told the Times that 40 million would be needed to ward off a serious onslaught of the disease. Millions more doses of the vaccine are needed, along with medicines to counter anthrax and other lethal germs with the potential to be used as weapons.

The extremists who used commercial airliners to kill thousands of Americans last month are obviously capable of using any cruel murder technique they can master.

The work of law enforcement agencies around the world since the attack on America has been encouraging, but it would be naïve to believe law enforcement alone is enough to counter the fanatical killers who have targeted the United States.

The Bush administration and Congress should place public health preparations among the leading priorities for the war against terrorism.



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Nacho Guarache

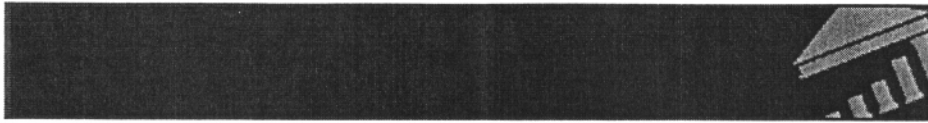
by Leo Garza



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KENS 5: Terrorist attack on our nation

SAPD reservists may leave department short

By Brandy Ralston

KENS 5 Eyewitness News

Web Posted : 10/01/2001 6:15 PM

As the country prepares for a war on terrorism, the men and women of the armed forces prepare to leave home.

In San Antonio, some of those reservists include the men and women in blue.

"This war on terrorism is not going to be quick. It's not going to be easy. It's going to be a long drawn out war. For the people on the list it's not a matter of if they get called up. It's a matter of when they get called up," said SAPD union President Ronnie Welch.

He said the people on this list range from the leaders in the department to the ones patrolling the streets.

"If all these people get called up. It's definately going to hurt this department," Welch said.

As of Monday, of the 138 officers in the reserves, only 15 have been activated.

"We feel at this point those 15 officers that we have are certainly being missed, but we feel that we have enough man power at this point to be able to provide services to the public that are needed," said SAPD spokesperson Sgt. Gabe Trevino.

The police officers union said they will still ask for more staffing to help fill the void left behind by reservists being called up.

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No more Mr. Nice Guy: There ain't no justice at City

No more Mr. Nice Guy . . .

There ain't no justice. In Sunday's column, I reported that six council members violated Section 47 of the City Charter by going around City Manager Terry Brechtel to twist the arm of one of her subordinates. I failed to mention the charter-imposed "penalty" for such a violation: *"The council by a vote of two-thirds of its entire membership (can) expel the offending member."* The charter writers didn't say what should be done if violations were committed by more than half of the membership. Apparently they could neither foresee nor imagine the ethical level to which politicians of the 21st century would fall.

Homebound prodigals. A



**RODDY
STINSON**

perceptive reader has found a silver lining behind the news that San Antonio has lost \$7 million because of cancelled conventions: *"Roddy, we're not the only city losing business. Conventions are being cancelled around the world. That means our globetrotting officials will have to stay in town. Financially, we could come out way ahead."*

Coke, hope and dopes. An even more insightful reader

says: *"I have come up with the top three ways to get rich quick — (1) sell drugs, (2) start a charity and pocket the money, (3) do business with the San Antonio City Council."*

Wish we all could be California churls. The difference between the way the Air Force deals with McClellan AFB contamination and Kelly AFB contamination was, again, made clear in a recent announcement that the federal government will spend \$38 million to clean up one two-acre, 30-foot-deep landfill on the west side of McClellan. The reason: *"It contains debris and chemical solutions from a top-secret analytical laboratory that operated nearly 50 years on the base. . . . Former lab workers told cleanup officials that they might uncover any amount of radioactive samples, solutions and tainted lab equipment."* Rather than let Mother Nature take care of the mess, government officials promised to clean it up, thus avoiding the wrath of churlish West Coast environmentalists.

Meanwhile, deep in the heart of Chumpland. Air Force officials have acknowledged that in the 1960s, carcasses of animals used in radiological research were buried at a site that is now under the Kelly golf course. At another site under the sixth fairway, Kelly workers disposed of radioactive waste that was "sealed in reinforced concrete pipes and buried vertically." Rather than remove the nasty stuff, the Air

Force continues to assure the community that "it poses no threat."

Something else not to worry about. From the Jan. 31, 1992, San Antonio Light: *"Heavy metals have been detected in shallow groundwater and in Leon Creek at Kelly AFB . . . lead, cadmium and beryllium have been found in samples taken from the creek. The metals likely were dumped in a cluster of landfills used from 1917 to 1968."* Fortunately for San Antonio South Siders, the Air Force has pledged to write as many press releases as it takes to explain why the landfills do not threaten their health, safety and welfare.

Did I mention smallish, green and conjoined? The latest buzz around town: Harry Siskind, the entrepreneurial whiz behind Body Solutions, is pondering the possibility of publishing a tabloid "with big pictures and bold headlines" to compete with the Express-News. An effort to contact him to get a "yea" or "nay" about the rumor has not been successful. But if Siskind reads this report, I urge him to continue pursuing his publishing dream not only for himself but for the two-headed, three-eyed, four-fingered and calf-faced citizens of this community who do not receive the coverage they deserve.

To contact Roddy Stinson, call (210) 250-3155, or e-mail rstinson@express-news.net.

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Medical teams give it their best while preparing for the worst

By Tony Plohetski
American-Statesman Staff
Monday, October 1, 2001

SAN ANTONIO -- Members of the 59th Medical Wing at Lackland Air Force Base maneuvered through an obstacle course of walls and hills, carrying a makeshift stretcher with a soldier suffering mock injuries.

Hours later, teams of nurses hovered around a lifelike mannequin, honing their trauma treatment skills using field equipment considered primitive in any modern hospital.

They were all preparing for the bloodshed of war.

"The skills and information they get out here are things that could save their lives and the lives of patients," said Maj. Cathy Sykes, deputy commander for the 59th Readiness Squadron, in charge of preparing medical personnel for war.

By day, the dozens of active-duty doctors, nurses and technicians who participated in last week's training work in the sprawling Wilford Hall Medical Center, the nation's largest Air Force hospital and an anchor of San Antonio's medical community. But they and about 2,000 other medical workers also stand ready to go anywhere in the world in case of natural disasters, large-scale accidents and now, perhaps most imminently, war.

The Pentagon has already mobilized one team from Lackland, but military officials declined to say how many were activated or where they were sent. Teams capable of pitching so-called TEMPER (Tent Expandable Modular Personnel) tents, where they can render aid to hundreds, were also sent to help with search and rescue efforts at the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. Earlier this year, those same teams assisted about 1,000 victims of the Houston floods by setting up a treatment center at the Astrodome.

The Lackland group could be among the first to get called to action in Central Asia because of its size and extensive training.

And although last week's training activities are an annual requirement for medical staff members from 262 specialty teams, including dental and mental health workers, the threat of war has sparked renewed attention to the class material, students and their instructors said.

"The events recently definitely bring home the importance, even though it seems somewhat routine," said Maj. Matt Westerberg, a dentist.

The training

The two-day training takes place on six acres near the hospital in southwest San Antonio, beginning at dawn and ending late. Students -- even class veterans -- said the training is intense but said they realize the need to re-create an authentic war zone.

Although participants aren't graded, each activity is followed with a discussion in which instructors outline students' strengths and shortcomings.

Students also participate in a late-night mass casualty exercise in which they must use flashlights to comb dense woods for plastic dummies. They learn to provide medical care while wearing gas masks and suits to protect themselves from chemical warfare.

For newcomers, the most frightening aspect of the training is when they are instructed to don their gas masks and enter the "confidence chamber," a 15-foot-square room into which potent tear gas is filtered, Sykes said. Officials use the exercise to remind soldiers that the threat of the mask failing is minuscule.

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But the first order of business is learning how to move a patient using a gurney.

Before beginning the half-mile obstacle course, Staff Sgt. Susan Moreno teaches the four-member gurney teams to listen to the team's front-right member, who is in charge of shouting commands. She then commands loudly, "Down! Down! Down!" after teaching students how to quickly lower sometimes-bulky patients to the ground without jostling them should enemy fire begin.

On the course, students hoist and lower patients over six-foot walls that they must also shimmy over. They transport the injured while crawling or climbing steep hills.

And they endure it without a sigh or grunt.

"It's pretty challenging, but you have to stay mentally strong," said Capt. Jeanette Frantal, a registered nurse. "You have to convince yourself that you can do anything for yourself, your teammates and your patient."

Later in the training, Frantal and other nurses practice with Stan the Man, a \$250,000 robot that mimics injuries common in war. The 59th Medical Wing purchased Stan nearly two years ago through a grant from the federal Tri-Service Nursing Program, to provide better war training for nurses.

The robot is programmed to tell nurses the location of its pain, and it emits a human-like pulse and heartbeat. It also answers their questions about its condition, telling them during one simulation, "I hurt my ankle or something."

Stan training begins with simple ailments, such as broken bones and burns, but then escalates to more serious massive blood loss and head trauma. Sykes said the training is particularly important because, unlike those in hospitals, the nurses in the field provide the patient's first treatment -- without doctors at their sides.

"He's challenging," said Maj. Amanda Flagg. "He manifests everything of the classic symptoms he represents, and it challenges you to think through what's going on and use your skills."

Preparation continues

For Lt. Col. James Henderson, a doctor, equally challenging but more grim is the mass casualty exercise. Last week was his 14th time doing the training, but it's never easy, he said.

The exercise requires participants to decide which team members will go into the line of fire to pluck the injured and the dead, which will stay behind to set up tents and equipment, and which will evaluate patients' conditions and tag them accordingly. To make the exercise more real, instructors pipe the sounds of missiles and gunfire onto the grounds.

"You lose the idea that you are in southwest San Antonio," Henderson said.

The last time it was real life for a large number of the 59th Medical Wing was during the Persian Gulf War a decade ago, when 1,000 from the group were sent.

Officials said that the loss in staff cut into the number of patients Wilford Hall could treat but that operations weren't severely hindered. Wilford Hall, which treats 2,661 outpatients in a typical day, is one of the city's main trauma centers.

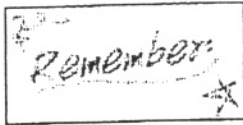
"The hospital is going to remain open," said Tech. Sgt. Steve Elliott, spokesman for Wilford Hall. "We'll still do operations; we'll still see people in the emergency rooms."

As night fell on day one of the training, participants were quick to acknowledge their fatigue but said the exercises made them more confident about possibly going to war.

"People know now that the next time they do this, it might be for real," Henderson said.

You may contact Tony Plohetski at tplohetski@statesman.com or 246-0053.

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Terrorist victims need comfort and aid.
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Bin Laden terror cell suspected in Arizona

Dennis Wagner and Tom Zoellner

The Arizona Republic

Sept. 29, 2001 12:00:00

Arizona appears to have been the home of a "sleeper cell" of Osama bin Laden's worldwide terrorist organization, with a select group of operatives living quietly in bland apartment complexes and obtaining flight training in preparation for the Sept. 11 attack.

The organization's known history in the state goes back nine years, and scholars say the activities of at least three part-time Arizona residents fit the pattern of the al-Qaida terrorist network.

"We can only speculate at this point, but I'm convinced the FBI is operating under the assumption that Arizona was host to an al-Qaida cell," said Jack Williams, a professor of law at Georgia State University in Atlanta, who has studied the network's financing methods.

Among the suspects:

- Lotfi Raissi, a one-time resident of the Wickertree Apartments in north Phoenix, was arrested in England this week. British prosecutors say the Algerian pilot is a mid-level player in the al-Qaida organization who gave flight training to four of the terrorists in Arizona.

He is the first person publicly accused of helping the hijackers prepare for the attacks.

- Hani Hanjour, identified by the FBI as a hijacker who died when American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon, lived in Tucson and Phoenix and took flight training courses in Scottsdale. Authorities

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say they have a videotape of Hanjour with Raissi on a flight from Phoenix to Las Vegas in June.

- Nawaf Alhazmi, a Saudi national who was aboard the same flight, was a Hanjour associate and possibly had flight training in Arizona. FBI agents discovered a cashier's check made out to a Phoenix-area flight school in his vehicle after the terrorist attack.

- Khalid Almihdhar lived with Hanjour in San Diego and reportedly attended a flight school in Arizona. Investigators told the *Washington Post* that they are confident that Almihdhar is a member of the al-Qaida network. He also was on the plane that crashed into the Pentagon.

- Wadih El-Hage, a former Tucson resident and bin Laden lieutenant, was imprisoned in connection with the 1998 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Tanzania.

Years earlier, he engineered the purchase of a military surplus jet from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base and may have had a role in the assassination of the leader of a controversial Islamic sect in Tucson in 1990.

- Unnamed bin Laden "henchmen" who reportedly researched buying a Boeing 727 jetliner in Arizona just six months before the Sept. 11 hijackings. A law enforcement official told the *New York Post* that the men had "kicked the tires" of some used airplanes in Denver and Tucson but ultimately did not make a purchase.

Confirmation that an al-Qaida cell operated in Arizona has not yet come from federal officials.

On Thursday, Senate Intelligence Committee member John Kyl, an Arizona Republican, acknowledged an FBI failure to root out Arizona-based conspirators but said he could not discuss whether a terrorist network existed, or still exists, in the state.

Ed Hall, an FBI spokesman in Phoenix, declined comment, as did Michael Johns of the U.S. Attorney's Office. Both men said all information on the terrorist case is being released by the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C. Officials there did not return phone calls.

The organization

Al-Qaida is Arabic for "the base," and it is an organization that grew out of the Muslim guerrilla resistance to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the late 1980s. Bin Laden, the wealthy son of a Saudi Arabian construction magnate, joined the underground movement against the Russians and received CIA support.

He soon became disenchanted with what he perceived as American interference in the Middle East and began to preach an embittered version of Islam that makes the killing of Americans and Jews a

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religious obligation.

Bin Laden developed what experts call the cellular structure of al-Qaida, in which small groups of zealous members operate without knowledge of each other. The cells are connected to each other only at the very top of the hierarchy; if one group is caught, its members cannot inform on the others.

The close-knit sect is hard to infiltrate; FBI officials have said they have been able to recruit informants in only a half-dozen instances.

"They are highly decentralized and highly mobile," said Thomas Gouttierre, the head of the center for Afghanistan Studies at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. "They are based on guerrilla warfare theories."

Al-Qaida is divided into three basic parts, according to Williams: a financial wing that solicits donations from wealthy benefactors; a logistical wing that maintains a series of training camps and bases in Afghanistan and Egypt; and an operational wing that consists of hundreds of devoted members assigned to fade into the cultural background of various nations, including the United States.

Messages typically are not delivered over the phone or through e-mail, which can both be intercepted, but by face-to-face meetings in secure rooms, where instructions are sometimes spoken in coded language by an unwitting middleman, Gouttierre said.

It is a system designed to foil modern eavesdroppers, he said.

"These people have been fighting their whole lives against intelligence organizations," Gouttierre said. "The best way to be high-tech is not to use technology."

Most members on the operational level in America have kept themselves clean-shaven and avoid associating with other Muslims in an effort to distance themselves from their traditional Middle Eastern backgrounds, Georgia State's Williams said.

The various spellings of their Arabic names, combined with a series of aliases and false birth dates, make them hard to track down when they move. And their penchant for anonymity has become legend.

"I have not seen one person who met or knew this guy," said Ihsan Saadeddin, spokesman for the Islamic Community Center in Phoenix, referring to Hanjour.

"They were trained not to be with other people."

Omar Shahin of the Tucson Islamic Center said members of the Tucson mosque may have helped bin Laden in the 1980s, when he was fighting against the Soviets. But that was during the Cold War, when U.S. intelligence agencies were encouraging support for bin Laden.

"They (the CIA) called him a freedom fighter," Shahin said. "Then they tell us he is involved in terrorist acts, and they stopped supporting him,

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and we stopped."

Shahin and Saadeddin expressed doubt that Muslims were responsible for the Sept. 11 attack. They also said that they don't trust much of what the FBI has divulged, including the hijackers' identities.

However, according to Larry Goodson, professor of political science at Bentley College in Massachusetts, the shadowy cluster of key players in Arizona resembles an al-Qaida cell.

"These are people whose job it is to come to the United States and settle into regular jobs," said Goodson, the author of *Afghanistan's Endless War*. "They are not politically active. They do not flaunt their religious backgrounds. Their job is to lay low until they are activated. It looks like Arizona had some of these folks there."

Early days

Al-Qaida's first known connection to Arizona took root in 1985, when a veteran of the Afghan resistance named Wadih El-Hage moved here to wed an American Muslim named April Ray in an arranged marriage.

He worked a series of low-wage jobs, including a stint as a janitor. Records show that the couple lived in an apartment at 2002 Fort Lowell Road in Tucson in 1989, where residents today have no memories of them.

Federal authorities say El-Hage, nicknamed "The Manager" within al-Qaida, may have helped facilitate the unsolved 1990 murder of imam Rashad Khalifa, who preached a version of the Koran contrary to traditional Islamic doctrine.

El-Hage moved to Sudan, which was then bin Laden's headquarters, shortly afterward but reestablished connections to Tucson in 1992, when he reportedly asked a Texas commercial pilot named Essam Al-Ridi to buy a jet for bin Laden.

Al-Ridi traveled to Tucson and found a T-39A Sabreliner at the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. One observer described the craft as "an old crappy puddle-jumper."

Al-Ridi paid the U.S. military a reported \$250,000 for the airplane and flew it to Sudan, where he personally handed the keys to bin Laden at a dinner party, according to court testimony.

The jet was to be used to transport Stinger missiles to Pakistan. But the plane's brakes failed during a test flight, and it crashed at the end of a runway in Khartoum in 1994.

El-Hage later returned to Arlington, Texas, and got a job managing a tire store. Federal prosecutors accused him of conspiring with bin Laden to blow up the U.S. Embassy in Tanzania in 1998.

Al-Ridi then turned on bin Laden and became a government witness. He testified against El-Hage, who last year was convicted of conspiracy and now is in federal prison.

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Flight training

Of all the phantom figures in Arizona, 29-year-old Hanjour left the most visible trail. He took part in two training stints at CRM flight school in Scottsdale during 1996 and 1997, as well as practice sessions this summer with Raissi and others on a flight simulator at Sky Harbor International Airport.

He first appeared here around 1991, when he moved to Tucson and attended an intensive English-language course at the University of Arizona.

Hanjour, who obtained a commercial pilot's license in 1999 and listed a home address in Taif, Saudi Arabia, apparently spent much of the 1990s in his homeland.

During 1996, he lived for a time in Hollywood, Fla., the location of another apparent sleeper cell. There, he stayed at the home of Susan and Adnan Khalil, a former Arizona couple who knew Hanjour's brother in Tucson. Hanjour surfaced in the Valley in 1998, living in nondescript apartments in north Phoenix and Mesa.

Like all of the suspects, Hanjour appears to have been an itinerant loner with no apparent means of support.

His roommates have vanished. Muslim leaders say he did not attend Valley mosques. Neighbors barely recall him.

But there is a paper trail. Hanjour got a Mesa traffic ticket in 1998 for driving without registration or insurance - he claimed to be a student - and paid a fine.

This summer, he, Raissi and two other Middle Eastern men paid \$200 each to rent a flight simulator at Sawyer Aviation, a company at Sky Harbor Airport.

Then Hanjour apparently headed east.

The *Washington Post* reported that he hired pilots to fly him in small planes over Washington, D.C., at least three times during a six-week period before the terrorist attack and attempted to rent a plane on another occasion.

Meanwhile, Hanjour's former roommates, Almihdhar and Alhazmi, were placed on an FBI watch list after Almihdhar reportedly was videotaped 18 months ago in Malaysia with a suspect in last year's bombing of the USS Cole.

Doubts

But the Tucson Islamic Center's Shahin is not convinced. He says that more than 1,200 Muslims died in the World Trade Center catastrophe, a number that has not been substantiated by authorities, and that no genuine follower of Islam would kill other Muslims.

Nor, he added, would Muslims have gone to strip clubs prior to the attack, as several of the terrorists in Florida reportedly did.

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As for al-Qaida nests in America, Shahin said, "All of these, they make it up."


Experts agree on one point: The ordinary-seeming lives of the suspected Arizona terrorists contravene the typical pattern of a suicide bomber. Most have tended to be young, impoverished and heavily coached, according to Charles Smith, a professor of Middle Eastern studies at the University of Arizona.


By contrast, the suspected members of the Arizona cell were older, had middle-class and independent lifestyles and showed no outward signs of their intentions.

"All our understandings of what we thought were terrorists before are now overthrown," Smith said.

This story contains information from the Associated Press.

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AETC
BASES

News Clips

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Arizona Republic
Valley & State Section
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Duty calls; 2 Valley air shows canceled

By Lesley Wright
The Arizona Republic

The sleek, screaming jet fighters set to thrill thousands at air shows in Scottsdale and Deer Valley this fall have been redeployed for real-life duties, causing the cancellation of both events.

"They have a far more important mission at this time," said Chris Read, operations manager at the Scottsdale Airport.

Canceled were:

■ The 30th anniversary celebration of Deer Valley Airport, which would have been held Oct. 20 and 21.

■ The 15th annual Scottsdale AirFair, which had been scheduled for Nov. 10 and 11 at Scottsdale Airport.

Without the military aircraft, it "would have only been half a show," Tim Owens of Event Promotions said.

Given the uncertainty and the military's high-alert status in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, it seemed prudent to cancel the shows now, promoters said.

About 70 or 80 vintage and current planes perform at the Scottsdale show each year, but audience surveys showed that the modern fighter jets were the biggest draw.

This year, Owens expected F-16 Fighting Falcons, F-15 Strike Eagles, A-10 Thunderbolts and Navy F-18 Hornets to join the show.

The other half was to include a reunion of "Warbirds" that flew in World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

A large portion of the proceeds from the show are donated to the Scottsdale Kiwanis Club for children's programs.

"We were disappointed because we thought it would have been a great way to rally the community and show our patriotism," Owens said. "But the city thought it was a little too early for that."

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Somber Luke pilots train for new war

By David Madrid
The Arizona Republic

Any feelings of anger by Luke Air Force Base pilots over the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York and the attack on the Pentagon has given way to somberness, resolve and seriousness.

"There's a seriousness among the instructors at the base, and also the students," said Air Force Capt. David "Rock" Bottomlee, an F-16 pi-

lot instructor. "The instructors understand how important it is for us to send out these students. We only have them for seven months before we send them out ready for combat."

The 30-year-old captain says the F-16 student pilots and instructors are focused on the success of their mission.

"We're ready to do whatever the president needs us to do," Bottomlee said. "If he needs us to peacekeep, that's what we'll do. If he needs us to find a spe-

cific target and destroy it, then we'll destroy it."

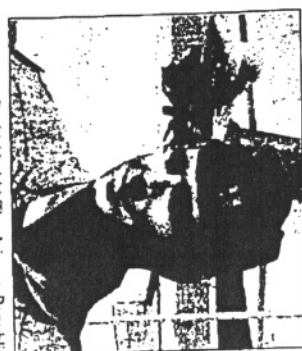
Luke Air Force Base is the largest fighter wing in the world and the only F-16 training base in the country, with 200 F-16s. It traditionally flies about 39,000 sorties a year. Each F-16 fighter jet is worth \$19 million to \$25 million.

Bottomlee says that if President Bush does decide that F-16 fighting Falcons must be used in the war, then those pilots will have trained at Luke.

F-16 student pilots are already pilots when they begin their training at Luke. Once at Luke though, they are given seven months of F-16 training. Bottomlee said 1,000 pilots a year graduate from Luke.

"As the instructors, we really look at these guys, and you have to look at them squarely in the face, and say, 'Would I want this guy to fly with me in combat?' knowing that in three

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David Madrid/The Arizona Republic
Air Force Capt. David Bottomlee says Luke's pilots are resolved and serious.

PILOTS

+ Serious, somber

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or four months, he's probably going to be in combat," he said.

Bottomlee also pointed out that the base trains about 1,000 crew chiefs a year. Crew chiefs maintain the jets and are re-

sponsible for the F-16's performance and for maintaining documentation.

The captain said he doesn't know what the military's plans are for the F-16, but he pointed out that the jet is a frontline and multirole fighter used for bombing, air-to-air warfare, night fighting and destroying an enemy's air defenses.

He also said that Luke trains the best pilots and crew chiefs in the world, so he has no doubt that they will perform admirably when called upon to defend the nation.

Bottomlee said the nation's

unity and support also helps the pilots. He pointed to the noisy F-16s as they flew in and out of the base.

"That's the sound of freedom going by, and we need to remember that," he said. "When I drive down the streets here, when I drive in my neighborhood and see all the American flags waving, that's a beautiful sight."

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Luke AFB vital now, Stump says

By David Madrid
The Arizona Republic

Several U.S. Senate members Tuesday were unsuccessful in stopping another round of military base closings.

But the prospect of closure is unlikely to affect Luke Air Force Base, said U.S. Rep. Bob Stump, R-Ariz., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

With the country heading into war, Luke becomes more important because it is the largest fighter wing in the Air Force and the nation's only F-16 fighter pilot training base, Stump said.

Training pilots is as important as ever, Stump said.

"We've had a tremendous shortage of pilots even before this (attack) happened," Stump said. "It's hard to compete for pilots because we've ended up being a training ground for the airlines."

The Senate killed an effort Tuesday by a narrow roll call

vote, S347, to remove base closures from the defense authorization bill.

But the House Armed Services Committee did remove the base-closure issue from its version of the defense bill. Stump said a conference committee probably will have to reconcile the differences.

Stump isn't convinced bases need to close, however, and neither are many others.

"The Pentagon has not done a good job of proving there has been a savings," Stump said of the previous four base-closure and realignment efforts.

"They have spent hundreds of millions of dollars cleaning up bases and then they give them away."

The military supports another round of base closures, saying it has a 23 percent surplus of bases.

U.S. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., has called for more base closures, saying the money saved could be used to streamline the armed forces

and make them more efficient. McCain has expressed his support for Luke and has advised supporters that they must stop residential encroachment on the base if they wish to save it.

Steve Jewett, Gov. Jane Hull's adviser on military affairs, says the state will continue its effort to address residential encroachment around the base, located in the rapidly growing West Valley.

A growing number of housing developments edging closer to Luke has put the base at odds with developers.

The closer homes come to the base, the more noise complaints the base gets from residents. That could damage Luke in the eyes of a base-closure commission.

"We're pressing on regardless of what they (Congress) do," Jewett said.

On Monday, bidding was opened for a land-use study and plan for the area around the base.

The governor and Legislature in the last session appropriated \$1 million for the land-use study and an additional \$2 million to go toward funding an agricultural preservation district that would serve as a buffer around the base.

At Luke, Col. Dennis Réa, vice commander of the 56th Fighter Wing, says Luke is an ideal location for training fighter pilots because of its year-round flying weather and the location of the Barry M. Goldwater Air Force Range within 15 flying minutes of Luke.

"Once our pilots complete their training at Luke, they are assigned to operational units and deployed around the world," Réa said.

Luke injects about \$2 billion a year into the local economy.

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Hutchison discusses security

Senator meets with Sheppard leaders

Lynda Stringer

Times Record News

U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison touted aviation security as a top priority during a stop at Sheppard Air Force Base Friday.

Two days after the terrorist attacks, the Texas Republican introduced emergency legislation that would increase the number of air marshals. She said the bill is part of a comprehensive aviation security package the Senate is set to debate next week.

She is also talking with base leaders about what Sheppard offers the military as a vital role in combat readiness in the wake of the threat of new rounds of base closures.

"Sheppard AFB is one of the premiere training bases," she said. "It's a special place, particularly as we are gearing up for this mobilization."

Hutchison on Wednesday voted with Sen. Jim Bunning, R-Ky, in favor of an amendment to the defense authorization bill that would have delayed another round of base closures. The Senate measure failed 54-46, paving the way for closures to go forward.

"I will not support another round of base closings until we have done our homework, until we have a study," Hutchison said. "Until we know how this new war . . . is going to be waged, how long it is going to take and where the bases might be needed."

Hutchison is also pushing legislation that would give retirement benefits to families of military members killed in the line of duty. The benefits would be retroactive to Sept. 10 to include those killed in the attack on the Pentagon.

Hutchison, who authored the sky marshal legislation, pushed its importance Friday as a first step to protecting the American people.

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from future terrorism by beefing up security with sky marshals, more experienced airport security screeners and increasing cockpit security.

"We can't stop there, we have to look at other threats," she said. "We don't want to be the general that fought the last war. When we fix aviation the terrorists will look somewhere else."

Hutchison — the ranking Republican on the Senate's aviation subcommittee — said the sky marshal program is quickly growing in strength. "Notices have gone out for hiring sky marshals and we are now detaching from other agencies," she said.

Border patrol and customs agents are filling in the gap and National Guardsmen are being tasked as a temporary fix.

"It will take time to train the new ones," Hutchison said.

The new field of sky mar-

shals would be federal employees and number in the thousands, she said. The newly trained screeners would be a mix of federal employees and contract workers.

Hutchison, on a tour of Texas military installations, was briefed by 82nd Training Wing commander Brig. Gen. Michael Collings on the status of base security measures, which are still heightened at Force Protection Condition Bravo, and was quickly whisked away by her press aide after a brief press conference at 82nd TRW headquarters.

"I received a report on the high security measures being taken and I appreciate what they are doing," Hutchison said.

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Retirees unruffled by SAFB security measures

Lynda Stringer

Times Record News

The heightened security at Sheppard Air Force Base isn't keeping military retirees away. In fact, it doesn't even bother them to be stopped and have their cars searched.

It's all part of the job, they say.

"I haven't noticed any problems, you pull your ID out, you slow down and if you're one of the lucky ones, you'll get searched," said Air Force retiree Marvin Brincefield, 62.

The base has been under tight security since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C. Today, access is not as slow as it was right after the attacks when Sheppard was at Force Protection Condition Delta, its highest security level.

"The first few days they were backed up, but it's moving pretty smoothly now," Brincefield said. "You still have to give yourself some extra time."

"It's a breeze now," said Air Force veteran Bill English, who had to hitch a ride with a retiree friend to attend the recent POW/MIA Remembrance Ceremonies at Sheppard.

Brincefield goes on base a couple times a week to shop at the commissary or the Base Exchange and for hospital appointments.

"I've talked to some who had their cars searched a couple of times and they have no problem with it," he said. "The way things are going we don't need to have a problem with it, we need to go along with what they are doing."

Sheppard chief of public affairs Maj. John Skinner said no one with proper identification has a problem with access.

"Retirees certainly have proper ID, and we've had no complaints," Skinner said. "They accept that there will be delays at Sheppard's gates and that it is a small price to pay to ensure security for all people."

Sheppard Commissary manager Michael Cox said retirees have come out to shop in the same numbers.

"It's been relatively con-

stant, looking at the numbers from last year — it hasn't had a real effect," Cox said. "The retirees are very understanding, they have served their country and probably respect it more than the civilians trying to get in the gate."

Retired Army veteran Ed Vancil, 82, and his wife, Bernadine, 78, don't hesitate to make the trip to Sheppard and wait through the security police checks.

"I go to the commissary or to pick up medicine at the dispensary and there's no problem," Vancil said. "You just have to show your ID card each place you go."

Douglas Barber, 74, is a retired Air Force captain, and he's figured out how to get around the long lines at the main gate.

"It's better to go into the hospital gate," Barber said. "There's more on the main gate with the transport trucks and moving vans."

Barber goes out to the golf course and his wife picks up groceries, and he doesn't mind the extra time it takes.

"It slows us down a little bit, but most of us in the military are prepared for 'em to search us any time they want. We're loyal," he said.

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Late deal prevents walkout

Base union votes to not strike after compromise

Christina Vance

Times Record News

A 401-throat cheer heralded the last-minute compromise that prevented a strike against a new aircraft maintenance contractor at Sheppard Air Force Base, union officials said Sunday.

Members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers Local 2771 came within minutes of voting whether to strike against Lear Siegler Inc., a company taking over maintenance of the base's trainer jets today.

A last-minute cellular phone offer to a union official during the meeting at VFW Post 2147 played a vital role in preventing the strike, local union President Walter Beeman said.

Conflict brewed between LSI and the union because of proposed changes to the contract, including dropping six employees off work on short or long-term disability. LSI beat Lockheed Martin's bid for the contract with a \$230 million deal awarded them in July.

The compromise made allowances for those workers. It also kept certain insurance premiums at their current rates for the next 18 months. The new company had proposed raising those rates significantly, Beeman said.

A 383-18 vote against going on strike came as good news for working relations with the union, LSI spokesman Lee Hart said.

"It would seem the workers were happy, too," he said. "I really think we had a reasonable compromise."

But Chief Steward Jody Bennett said he was disappointed it took so long to reach a workable agreement with the new contractor. Because of the current increase in United States military activity, Bennett said many workers had mixed emotions about walking off the job.

"They forced that issue to try to back us into a corner," he said. "We want to go back to work to training fighter pilots. We just were fighting

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to keep what we got (in previous labor negotiations)."

Things might smooth over with LSI now that the conflict is resolved, Bennett said.

"Hopefully, we can work through that and become a tight ship out there," he said.

LSI also agreed to make no changes to grooming standards.

It had originally said haircuts must mirror the standards of the Air Force.

The union compromised on two issues, Beeman said.

Payday will go from once a week to once every two weeks, and LSI supervisors being brought in will keep their seniority.

"Those are the ones the members agreed to compro-



mise on," he said. "We stood together and came to an agreement."

This isn't the first time union negotiations with Local 2771 came down to the wire. The same group nearly went on strike over similar issues in April 2000 with Lockheed Martin.

Becky Chaney/Times Record News

Jody Bennett, chief union steward, and Walter Beeman, president of the Aerospace Workers Local 2771, spoke to the press after it was decided not to strike after Lear Siegler Inc. met their demands.

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Vets pleased with new insurance plan

Lynda Stringer
Times Record News

Despite billions of dollars being funneled into the active duty forces, military retirees won't be stiffed again on the health care they were promised.

The long-awaited TRICARE For Life health-care program for military retirees 65 and older begins today and ushers in a new era for millions of the nation's military retirees.

"It will be a success," said Army veteran Ward Coston of Wichita Falls, 73, whose corps of military lifers has waged a long battle for medical care.

"We have fought and fought for this," he said.

It's not 100 percent what

they were promised because they still have to pay prescription co-payments and a \$50 a month Medicare premium, but it's close enough.

"It is almost what we were promised and it's going to turn out to be the health care that we deserve," Coston said.

Douglas Barber, 74, a retired Air Force officer, is looking forward to the change — and the extra change it will leave in his pockets.

"They satisfied the promise they made to us that gives us medical for life and this will do it unless they get in a financial situation and have to retract it," Barber said. "I think it's real good."

Coston said fear that the program would be pulled out

TFL Info

Whom to call:
Ward Coston 692-4216
Jim Fancher 692-1585
TRICARE 800-977-6753

from under them due to a lack of funding from Congress is being eased.

He said the program has been funded by the Department of Defense this fiscal year and beginning with the next fiscal year, funding will be under the General Accounting Office.

"When it's under the GAO, the military retirees will have the same funding as other federal retirees and it won't have to go through Congress," he

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said.

Coston has been receiving medical care at Sheppard Hospital since 1995. "I have never gotten better medical care in my whole life than I have gotten out at Sheppard," he said.

But, not all retirees would be able to receive care at Sheppard. Those who can are among 1,300 selected to be part of TRICARE Plus. These are the retirees who were enrolled in the demonstration programs that eventually led to passage of TRICARE For Life.

Those under TRICARE For Life can still receive care from their hometown doctors, with Medicare and TRICARE picking up 100 percent the

cost, except for the Medicare premium. Medicare pays 80 percent and TRICARE pays 20 percent.

But as straightforward as the program is, Coston said some people still can't accept what they are being offered, especially widows.

"They're not understanding the full impact that this is going to have," he said. "The retirees should keep their spouses informed so when they become widows they know what to do."

Coston said the DOD is bending over backward to try to educate people on TRICARE For Life. His own group is doing the same.

Information on the new program was a large part of a

large national gathering of military retirees in Lawton Saturday. "The Gathering" included members of all retiree groups, including the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, The Retired Enlisted Association and The Retired Officers Association. Sheppard Hospital's new commander Col. Theresa Casey addressed the members on health care issues.

"We want each and every eligible beneficiary to get what they earned," Coston said.

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